

Michael F. Easley
Governor



State of North Carolina
Office of the Governor

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GOV. EASLEY'S RESPONSE TO SMART START AUDIT

"The Auditor's recommendation to combine Smart Start and *More at Four* represents a fundamental lack of understanding of early childhood development and public education policy. Smart Start and *More at Four* are two distinctly different initiatives that fulfill different goals. Both are important to serve the needs of our children in preparing them for success in life.

"Smart Start is an early childhood development initiative that provides a range of services for children ages birth to five, while *More at Four* is a specific, targeted education program for at-risk four-year-olds. Both Smart Start and *More at Four* have my full support. Early childhood development has been fully debated, studied and internationally recognized as effective and necessary. Questioning that premise is not only outside the scope of an audit but reflects a misunderstanding of basic educational and developmental issues."

More at Four is a solely state-funded pre-K program targeting only at-risk four-year-olds who are eligible for kindergarten the following year. It requires specific program standards to be met, specific curricula to be implemented, and high teacher qualifications (licensure).

In contrast, Smart Start is a non-profit organization that receives state and other funds and has a much broader mission focused on building an infrastructure to improve the quality of child care across all ages, birth to five. It also provides subsidy for at-risk children of all pre-school ages, not just four-year-olds. The subsidy payments are not necessarily linked to programs with the specific curriculum and staff standards that *More at Four* requires.

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